

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

Sub 1

1. A method for tracking prescription orders through a pharmacy having a plurality of physically spaced apart locations for filling the prescription order including the following steps:

receiving a prescription order;  
tagging the prescription order with a remote tag that stays with the prescription order;  
manually moving the prescription order to at least one location;  
automatically detecting the prescription order at the at least one location by sensing the remote tag attached to the order; and,  
recording the location of the prescription order at each location

2. The method for tracking prescription orders through a pharmacy of claim 1, further including the steps of:

displaying the location of the prescription order on a computer system display, thereby facilitating the easy location of said prescription order.

3. The method for tracking prescription orders through a pharmacy of claim 2, wherein said moving step includes moving said prescription order to at least three spaced apart locations within the pharmacy, and further including:

taking the prescription order from the customer at a first location;  
entering data about the prescription order and customer into a computer system at a second location; and  
storing the filled prescription order at a third location.

4. The method for tracking prescription orders through a pharmacy of claim 2, further including the steps of:

automatically collecting timing information the amount of time the prescription order remains at the first location;  
storing said timing information into the computer system; and,  
compiling workflow information based on the timing information.

5. The method for tracking prescription orders through a pharmacy of claim 4, further including the step of:

associating the workflow information with a particular worker to evaluate worker efficiency.

6. The method for tracking prescription order through a pharmacy of claim 5, wherein said pharmacy is a retail pharmacy.

7. The method for tracking prescription orders through a pharmacy of claim 4, wherein said compiling workflow information step includes:

automatically monitoring the amount of time said prescription order remains at said third location; and,

automatically signaling a pharmacy worker when the prescription order exceeds a predetermined amount of time at said third location.

8. The method for tracking prescription orders through a pharmacy of claim 4, wherein said workflow information step includes:

automatically detecting a first time associated with the prescription order being picked-up by a customer;

automatically determining if a new prescription order from that customer is a refill of the prescription order;

automatically determining a second time associated with the new prescription being presented to the pharmacy;

automatically comparing the difference between the first and second times with a predetermined amount to determine if the new prescription order has been prematurely submitted to the pharmacy; and,

automatically signaling a pharmacy worker if the new prescription order has been prematurely submitted.

9. A prescription order tracking system for use in a retail pharmacy having a first station therein for filling the prescription order, said tracking system including:

a computer system having a display;

a tag operably secured to the prescription order; and

a first tag reader positioned near the first station and in communication with said computer system, said first tag reader able to automatically detect the presence of said tag when said tag is in close proximity of said first tag reader and send a first signal to said computer system;

wherein said computer system processes said signal to display the presence of said tag at said first station, thereby displaying the location of said prescription order.

10. The prescription order tracking system of claim 9, further including:

a second station spaced apart from said first station; and wherein said second station has a second tag reader positioned in communication with said computer system, said second tag reader able to automatically detect the presence of said tag when said tag is in close proximity of said second tag reader and send a second signal to said computer system;

wherein said computer system processes said first signal and said second signal to display the location of said tag at one of said first and second stations, thereby displaying the location of said prescription order.

11. The prescription order tracking system of claim 9, wherein said tag is a bar code, and said tag reader is a bar code scanner.

12. The prescription order tracking system of claim 9, wherein said tag reader locates said tag through electromagnetic interrogation of a spatial region.

13. The prescription order tracking system of claim 12, wherein said tag reader is an electromagnetic field generator, and said tag is an electromagnetic antenna.

14. The prescription order tracking system of claim 12, wherein said tag is a transmitter for transmitting a signal, and said tag reader is able to receive said signal.

15. The prescription order tracking system of claim 9, wherein said tag is detachably secured to said prescription order.

16. The prescription order tracking system of claim 9, wherein said tag is rigidly secured to said prescription order.

17. The prescription order tracking system of claim 9, wherein said tag is secured to a carrier for receiving the prescription order therein.

18. The prescription order tracking system of claim 9, further including:

a storage bin having a plurality of cubbies, each said cubby having an individual identifier, and having a cubby tag reader in communication with said computer system, such that the presence of said tag within one of said plurality of cubbies is automatically detected by that cubby's tag reader and sends a cubby location signal to said computer system, said cubby location signal including the individual identifier of said one of said plurality of cubbies;

wherein said computer system process said first signal and said cubby location signal to display the location of said tag at one of said first location or said one of said plurality of cubbies.

19. The prescription order tracking system of claim 9, wherein said computer system monitors the time interval said tag remains at said first location and compiles workflow information based on said time interval.

20. The prescription order tracking system of claim 19, wherein said computer system correlates said workflow information with a particular worker to compile efficiency information on that worker.

21. The prescription order tracking system of claim 19, wherein said computer system monitors the amount of time said prescription order remains within a particular cubby and automatically signals when said time exceeds a predetermined amount, thereby allowing a pharmacy worker to restock said prescription order.

22. The prescription order tracking system of claim 9, wherein said tag reader is rigidly secured to said first station.

23. The prescription order tracking system of claim 9, wherein said tag reader is hand-held.

24. A prescription order tracking system for use in a retail pharmacy having a first station therein for filling the prescription order, said tracking system including:

a computer system having a display;

a tag operably secured to the prescription order; and

a first tag reader positioned near the first station and in communication with said computer system, said first tag reader able to automatically detect the presence of said tag when said tag is in close proximity to said first tag reader and send a first signal to said computer system;

a storage bin having a plurality of cubbies, each said cubby having an individual identifier, and having a cubby tag reader in communication with said computer system, such that the presence of said tag within one of said plurality of cubbies is automatically detected by that cubby's tag reader and sends a cubby location signal to said computer system, said cubby location signal including the individual identifier of said one of said plurality of cubbies;

wherein said computer system process said first signal and said cubby location signal to display the location of said tag at one of said first location or said one of said plurality of cubbies.

25. The prescription order tracking system of claim 24, wherein said first station is another one of said plurality of said cubbies.

26. The prescription order tracking system of claim 24, further including a switching device in communication with said first tag detector, said

cubby tag detector, and said computer system such that signal information is collected from said first and cubby tag detectors at predetermined intervals.

27. The prescription order tracking system of claim 24, wherein:  
said first tag reader is able to automatically detect when said tag is moved away from being in close proximity to said first tag reader and to send a second signal to said computer system.

28. The prescription order tracking system of claim 27, wherein said computer system monitors the time between receiving said first signal and said second signal to determine worker performance at the first station.